

REMARKS

Claims 7-8 and 10-11 have been amended. Claims 1-13 are pending in the case. Further examination and reconsideration of the presently claimed application are respectfully requested.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 1-6 were deemed allowed in their present form. To expedite prosecution, independent claims 7, 8, 10, and 11 have been amended to include the allowable subject matter of claim 1 as indicated on page 10 of the Office Action. Accordingly, Applicants believe the remaining claims 7-13 are now in condition for allowance.

Section 102 Rejections

Claims 7 and 8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,940,175 to Sun. In light of the amendments to independent claims 7 and 8 which now include the allowable subject matter from claim 1 (as indicated on page 10 of the Office Action), Applicants believe this rejection has been obviated in its entirety.

Section 103(a) Rejections

Claims 7-11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,420,864 to Abraham et al. (hereinafter “Abraham”) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,020,957 to Rosengaus et al. (hereinafter “Rosengaus”). Claims 12 and 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Abraham in view of Rosengaus and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,591,162 to Martin (hereinafter “Martin”).

In light of the amendments to independent claims 7, 8, 10, and 11 which now include the allowable subject matter from claim 1 (as indicated on page 10 of the Office Action), Applicants believe the rejections of claims 7, 8, 10, and 11, as well as claims 12-13 dependent therefrom, have been obviated in their entirety.

The rejection of claim 9 is respectfully traversed. To establish *prima facie* obviousness of a claimed invention, all claim limitations must be taught or suggested by the prior art. *In re Royka*, 490 F.2d 981, 180 U.S.P.Q. 580 (C.C.P.A. 1974), MPEP 2143.03. Obviousness cannot be established by combining or modifying the teachings of the prior art to produce the claimed invention, absent some teaching or suggestion or incentive to do so. *In re Bond*, 910 F. 2d 81, 834, 15 USPQ2d 1566, 1568 (Fed. Cir. 1990). The cited art does not teach or suggest all limitations of the currently pending claims, some distinctive limitations of which are set forth in more detail below.

The cited art does not teach or suggest a pod for loading wafers into a process tool that includes a mechanism for inspecting the wafers. Independent claim 9 recites in part: “[a] pod for loading wafers into a process tool, comprising ...b) a mechanism for inspecting said wafers.” None of the cited art, individually or in any combination thereof, teaches or suggests a pod for loading wafers into a process tool that includes a mechanism for inspecting the wafers.

In particular, Abraham teaches a substrate container for containing substrates that can be connected to a substrate measurement system such that the substrates can be loaded from the substrate container into the substrate measurement system by wafer transport means. (*See*, for example, Abraham -- col. 2, line 57 to col. 3, line 41). However, Abraham does not teach or suggest that the substrate container includes a mechanism for inspecting the substrates. In addition, Abraham teaches a measurement chamber that includes a measurement instrument. (*See*, for example, Abraham -- col. 1, lines 38-52). However, Abraham does not teach or suggest that the measurement chamber is configured for or can be used for loading wafers into a process tool. Therefore, Abraham does not teach or suggest a pod for loading wafers into a process tool that includes a mechanism for inspecting the wafers, as recited in claim 9. As such, Abraham does not teach or suggest all limitations of claim 9.

Rosengaus teaches a modular optical inspection system for inspecting a semiconductor wafer. (*See*, for example, Rosengaus -- col. 2, lines 36-55). However, Rosengaus does not teach or suggest a pod for loading wafers into a process tool that includes a mechanism for inspecting

the wafers, as recited in claim 9. As such, Rosengaus does not teach or suggest all limitations of claim 9 and cannot be combined with Abraham to overcome deficiencies contained therein.

Martin teaches a carrier configured for transfer of wafers between the carrier and a process tool by a wafer handling robot. (See, for example, Martin -- col. 2, lines 20-43). However, Martin does not teach or suggest that the carrier includes a mechanism for inspecting the wafers. Therefore, Martin does not teach or suggest a pod for loading wafers into a process tool that includes a mechanism for inspecting the wafers, as recited in claim 9. As such, Martin does not teach or suggest all limitations of claim 9 and cannot be combined with Abraham and/or Rosengaus to overcome deficiencies contained therein.

For at least the reasons stated above, claim 9 is believed patentably distinct over the cited art. In addition, as discussed herein, Applicants believe claims 7, 8, 10, and 11, as well as claims 12-13 dependent therefrom, are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, removal of this rejection as to claims 7-13 is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

This response constitutes a complete response to all issues raised in the Office Action mailed March 20, 2006. In view of the amendments and remarks presented herein, Applicants submit that pending claims 1-13 are in condition for allowance. If the Examiner has any questions, comments, or suggestions, the undersigned earnestly requests a telephone conference.

The Commissioner is authorized to charge any fees which may be required or credit any overpayment to deposit account number 50-3268/5589-04400.

Respectfully submitted,
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